

EDITORIAL.

THE ESTABLISHMENT of a biological survey by the Department of Agriculture, under a recent act of Congress, should mark the beginning of a new era in the botanical field-work of the United States. Some work of this kind has been done by the general government, and by different institutions, but it has been desultory and without any general plan. At the head of the new survey no more competent man could have been placed than Dr. Merriam, for his whole work has tended in this direction and his publications have shown a wide grasp of the problems. To be made most effective, large cooperation must be obtained from local organizations, which will work along definite lines in a general plan. The natural allies of the Department will be the Experiment Stations already established in every state, but even these should not be regarded as adequate. Where state biological surveys are organized, these should be associated with the government survey and work under its general direction; and where they are not, such organizations should be formed, or the biologists of the state should individually associate themselves with the general survey. There can be no doubt that abundant and important service can be suggested to every worker by Dr. Merriam. The new survey should prove a great stimulus to the coming generation of botanists, and to the strong movement in botany which is impelling them to emerge from herbaria and laboratories and to come in contact with the larger problems of plant-life. The gradual shifting of the botanical standpoint is becoming daily more evident, and the period of morphology is merging into one to be dominated by physiology, not merely the chemistry and physics of physiology, but the larger field of ecology.

THE MOVEMENT for the appointment of a scientific chief of the department of agriculture seems to have received a check,
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whether through its friends or enemies we are not informed. But as it has received already the cordial endorsement of a considerable number of the foremost scientific men and societies, it is to be hoped that it will yet be carried to success. What may be the condition in other lines of scientific work we do not know, but we do know that under the present division of labor in botany there is a dissipation of energy and a duplication of work that might be largely avoided under a more logical and consistent organization, such as could probably be secured by a wise and broad-minded scientific executive. Now that the head of the department holds a cabinet portfolio, it is out of the question to expect other than a political adviser of the President to be appointed. If under him there were a permanent chief, empowered to organize and harmonize all the scientific divisions as the president of a university directs its policy in consultation with heads of departments, we should find increased economy and efficiency of every division. Under the present conditions there is a division of botany, a division of agrostology, a division of forestry, and a division of vegetable physiology and pathology. It is needless to point out the absurdity of the naming of these divisions, which have been split off one by one from the original division of botany. Each now is wholly independent of the others in control, appropriations, quarters and equipment. There is a force of live young men in these divisions and a very great amount of work is done, on whose high quality we have had occasion frequently to comment. There should be a chief of the division of botany, with general direction of all botanical work; the present "division of botany" should be rechristened, while it and the other botanical divisions should be made sections, each in charge of an assistant chief. This would make it possible to concentrate the office and routine work so that each chief would be left freer to push the work of his section. There can be no doubt that under some such plan we should see even more important advances in pure and applied botany than have been possible under the present system.